

NNNNVV EEAT 500054
 PP RUHHR
 DE RUSBY #4007 175030
 ZNY 00000 ZZH
 P R 250942Z JUN 79
 FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE LACNO PRIORITY 4449
 INFO RUS300/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0041
 RUEKYO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1693
 RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5975
 RUHHR/AMEMBASSY TENDAN 256
 BT
 C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4000

25 JUN 79 11 28Z

Pol
 CHG
 Econ
 RF
 Chron

E.O. 12855: GDS 6/25/75 (AMTUTZ, J. BRUCE) OR/N
 TAGS: PINT, UP, AT, PINT
 SUBJECT: (C) MEETING WITH SOVIET DIPLOMAT: PART I OF III -
 OBSERVATIONS ON THE INTERNAL AFGHAN POLITICAL SCENE

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: HIGH SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL DISCLOSES SOVIETS
 HAVE BEEN URGING DPA TO ESTABLISH A "NATIONAL FRONT" TO RECAPTURE
 BASE OF THE GOVT - BUT SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS. THE DIPLOMAT
 DESCRIBED THE INSURGENCY AS CONFUSING. END SUMMARY.

3. THE NEW SOVIET MINISTER-COUNSELOR, VASILII STEPANOVICH
 SAFRONCHUK, PAID ME AN HOUR-LONG COURTESY CALL JUNE 24.
 UNQUESTIONABLY THE MOST INTERESTING SOVIET DIPLOMAT I HAVE EVER
 MET, I FOUND HIS OPINIONS FASCINATING, ESPECIALLY FOR WHAT HE
 HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE INTERNAL AFGHAN POLITICAL SCENE AND
 SOVIET-AFGHAN POLICY (SCPTL, PART II).

4. FROM HIS REMARKS, SOME OF WHICH WERE VEILED AND SOME NOT
 AT ALL, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY FINDS THE
 AFGHANISTAN SITUATION VERY "DIFFICULT". SOME OF SAFRONCHUK'S
 MORE INTERESTING COMMENTS I PRESENT BELOW:

5. THE NARROW POLITICAL BASE OF THE DRA. WHEN I MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE REPORTS CIRCULATING THAT THE DRA LEADERSHIP WAS TALKING WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTERS ETEMADI AND YOUSEFI ABOUT JOINING THE GOVT SO AS TO BROADEN ITS POLITICAL BASE, AND THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PLAYING SOME ROLE IN THIS, SAFRONCHUK SHOOK HIS HEAD. "WHAT IS TRUE," HE CONFIDED, "IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN URGING THE DRA LEADERSHIP TO BROADEN ITS BASE BY BRINGING IN NEW PEOPLE INTO THE GOVT, BUT WHAT IS NOT TRUE IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN HOLDING DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUSEFI OR ETEMADI." CONTINUING, HE SAID, "ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL FRONT, LIKE OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE DONE, WOULD BE SENSIBLE FOR THEM." SAFRONCHUK COMPLAINED HOWEVER THAT: "THEY (DRA) WILL NEITHER ALLOW ANY OPPOSITION, OR DO THEY WISH TO SHARE POWER. THEIR IDEA ABOUT BROADENING THE POLITICAL BASE IS SOLELY TO ORGANIZE STUDENT, YOUTH, WOMEN AND WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS, BUT THOSE ARE ALL PART OF THE SAME POLITICAL PARTY. THIS IS NOT BROADENING THE POLITICAL BASE." HE REMARKED, "THEY (DRA) ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT ANY SUGGESTION OF SHARING POWER. THEY ARE STUBBORN PEOPLE."

6. REFLECTING ON THE PROBLEMS FACING THE DRA, HE SAID ONE NOTABLE WEAKNESS (AND HE KEPT RETURNING TO THIS POINT) WAS THE "VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE GOVT." HE SAID: "YOU SEE THIS ABSENCE IN MANY WAYS. THE NEWSPAPERS ARE TERRIBLE, AND THE CULTURAL LIFE IS LACKING." IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOVT, SAFRONCHUK SAID, TO ATTRACT TO ITSELF "MORE INTELLECTUALS."

7. THE INSURGENCY - SAFRONCHUK SAID HIS EMBASSY FINDS THE INSURGENCY "VERY CONFUSING". THEY CANNOT IDENTIFY ANY SINGLE REBEL LEADER WHO DOMINATES THE OPPOSITION SUCH AS KHOMEINI OR HO CHI MINH DID IN THEIR COUNTRIES. HIS EMBASSY DOES BELIEVE THAT THE IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI GOVTS ARE ABETTING THE REBELS, THE IRANIS BY PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND RADIO BROADCASTS, AND THE PAKISTANIS BY CLANDESTINELY SUPPLYING ARMS AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. HE PLACED RELIGION (ISLAM, IT IS A TERRIBLE RELIGION!) AS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE INSURGENCY. THE POPULACE, HE SAID, ASSUMES "COMMUNISTS ARE AGAINST ISLAM," AND THIS HE OBSERVED MAKES THE DRA'S TASK VERY DIFFICULT.

8. WHEN, AT ONE POINT, I TOLD HIM THE US GOVT WAS NOT AIDING THE INSURGENTS, THAT WE HAVE SEVERAL TIMES TOLD THE DRA THIS, AND THAT I WAS CONSEQUENTLY UPSET BY THE REPEATED PICTURE CAPTIONS IN THE DRA PRESS THIS PAST WEEK, IMPLYING THAT THE SHOWN "CAPTURED" WEAPONS ORIGINATED WITH THE USA (AND CHINA), HE HAD THIS TO SAY. "IN MY MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH TOP LEVEL DRA MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS," HE SAID, "NOT ONCE HAVE I HEARD THE US ACCUSED AS ASSISTING THE INSURGENCY". WHEN I POINTED OUT THAT MOST OF THE FOREIGN MILITARY WEAPONS IN PAKISTAN WERE OF US OR CHINESE ORIGIN, AND THUS IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE FOR THE INSURGENTS ALONG THE PAK FRONTIER TO HAVE SUCH WEAPONS, HE SAID THAT THE DRA LEADERSHIP "KNOWS THIS". RETURNING TO AFGHAN-US RELATIONS, SAFRONCHUK SAID THAT, "THE MAIN DRA COMPLAINT ABOUT THE USA IS NOT ABOUT YOUR GIVING ARMS BUT ABOUT YOUR VERY CRITICAL PRESS."

9. THE TIME TO EVACUATE WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAS NOT COME. I TOLD SAFRONCHUK THAT ONE OF MY GRAVING CONCERNS WAS WHEN AND IF TO EVACUATE AMERICAN DEPENDENTS. INCIDENTS LIKE THE JUNE 23 OUTBREAK IN KABUL, I SAID, COMPELLED OUR EMBASSY TO ADDRESS THE QUESTION. SAFRONCHUK RESPONDED THAT, WHILE HE HIMSELF DID NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THIS KIND OF QUESTION ("THIS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AMBASSADOR AND THE OTHER MINISTER-COUNSELOR"), HE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND MY WORRY. "WHO KNOWS," HE SAID, "WHAT NEXT WEEK OR NEXT MONTH WILL BRING?" AS FOR WHAT HIS EMBASSY HAD DONE, HE SAID IT HAD EVACUATED TO THE USSR "ALL WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF SOVIETS WORKING OUTSIDE KABUL." AS FOR THOSE IN KABUL, HE SAID, ALL THE DEPENDENTS WERE STILL HERE. "WHEN THERE IS TROUBLE, LIKE YESTERDAY," HE SAID, "WE BRING THEM INSIDE THE EMBASSY COMPOUND FOR SAFETY." HE THOUGHT THE DRA WAS IN CONTROL OF KABUL AND DIDN'T THINK THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CITY REQUIRED AN EVACUATION.

12. BIO DATA. FOR A SOVIET DIPLOMAT, SAFRONCHUK IS EXTRAORDINARILY OPEN. HE IS WILLING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS, AND HE STRUCK ME AS BOTH INTELLIGENT AND A MAN YOU CAN REASON WITH. WITHIN THE HIERARCHY OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY, HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS "PROFESSIONALLY" HAVING THE RANK OF "AMBASSADOR," BUT PROTOCOL-WISE WAS HERE RANKED ONLY AS NO.3. THIS WAS BECAUSE THE OTHER MINISTER-COUNSELOR, YURIY K. ALEXEEV, HAD PRECEDED HIM TO KABUL, AND SINCE HE ARRIVED FIRST, 771-3 2- 53:0,8:~)16,9.2 AFTER AMBASSADOR PUZANOV. AS FOR HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITIES, SAFRONCHUK SAID HE WAS CONCERNED WITH "EXTERNAL QUESTIONS" WHILE ALEXEEV WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR "INTERNAL QUESTIONS." WHAT HE MEANT BY THIS WAS NOT CLEAR, BUT LATER HE REFERRED TO ALEXEEV'S FIELD AS "ADMINISTRATION."

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